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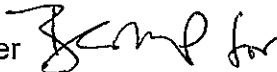
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Fifth District

June 29, 2010

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer 

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S INDEX QUARTERLY REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the March 9, 2010 Family and Children's Index (FCI) status report, the Chief Executive Office (CEO) and the Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN), in conjunction with the County FCI Managers Team¹ (Team) continued to make significant progress toward implementing your Board's directive to ensure that: (1) the FCI application is fully utilized; (2) efforts to include other County and non-County agencies continue to move forward; and (3) necessary enhancements are put in place to begin tracking and evaluating how information is being exchanged and used among participating FCI agencies.

The attached quarterly report is divided into two parts: (1) an outline of accomplishments achieved by the Team since the March 9, 2010 status report; and (2) preliminary efforts and results made by the Team to track and assess the exchange of information. It is important to underscore that the findings were obtained using an approach consisting of a "focus group" and an end-user survey. A more precise method for obtaining data will soon be available using a new technical enhancement that will automatically track the type(s) and frequency of communications between departments. This new enhancement is called the FCI *Communications Log* (CommLog), which is scheduled to be implemented by the middle of July 2010. In future reports, a combination of data extracted from the CommLog will be used to supplement quarterly anecdotal information obtained from focus groups and surveys.

¹ The Team is made up of representatives from the seven participating FCI agencies and the Chief Information Office, the Internal Services Department, and County Counsel.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"

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Some of the most significant highlights from the report are:

Accomplishments since the last status report for the period of March through May 2010:

- On March 9, 2010, conducted an informal “feedback” group with 60 Emergency Response Children’s Social Workers and four Human Service Workers selected from the Department of Children and Family Services’ (DCFS)-Lakewood Regional Office to gather their initial thoughts about the FCI application and information sharing process;
- On March 21, 2010, distributed a web-based survey to 814 authorized FCI users to gather crucial information about the application and its functionality;
- On March 29, 2010, submitted the County-sponsored AB 2322 (Feuer/Bass) which amends five child welfare related statutes to: (1) clarify and standardize who is allowed to participate in Multi-Disciplinary Teams; (2) authorize the County to store convictions on FCI for the 51 predicate offenses related to child abuse and neglect already being provided by the District Attorney (DA); and (3) allow identifying information on non-family members residing in a child's home to be stored in FCI;
- On April 27, 2010, ICAN and CEO, in partnership with the DA, convened a meeting with senior officers from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) to discuss their potential participation in FCI. During the discussion, it was determined that LAPD’s data could be extracted from the County’s Electronic Suspected Child Abuse Reporting System (E-SCARS) and uploaded into the FCI application;
- On April 29, 2010, Police Chief, Charlie Beck formally announced LAPD’s decision to participate in FCI at ICAN’s Quarterly Policy meeting; and
- On May 12, 2010, CEO and ICAN co-chaired a meeting of medical experts from the private sector, DCFS, and the Department of Health Services (DHS). The meeting culminated in the selection of initial at-risk indicators and a data extraction methodology that will be used by DHS and could be replicated by private hospitals to participate in FCI. The group will continue to meet to refine this approach (based on DHS’ implementation and lessons learned) with the goal of bringing Children’s Hospital Los Angeles on board by October 2010.

Preliminary efforts and results made by the Team to track and assess the exchange of information show that:

- FCI has proven to be a very useful tool for the purposes of investigating child abuse and neglect;

- FCI provides valuable, comprehensive information that would otherwise not be accessible as quickly;
- Number of queries performed by the Team continue to increase each month; and
- One-third of participating department staffs report that they would not have made the same decision without having the FCI information.

As the Team continues to work collaboratively, it is expected that FCI's use and functionality will continue to improve as additional enhancements are made to the application and the information sharing process. The Team will continue to identify new legislative opportunities and expand FCI participation to include other County and non-County agencies as needed to increase the County's ability to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We will continue to keep your Board apprised of these developments on a quarterly basis.

If you have any questions about the report or the findings, please contact me or your staff may contact Kathy House, Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer at (213) 974-4530, or via e-mail at khhouse@ceo.lacounty.gov.

WTF:KH:LB
CP:GS:hn

Attachment

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Sheriff
District Attorney
Children and Family Services
Mental Health
Probation
Public Health
Public Social Services



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

FAMILY and CHILDREN'S INDEX

STATUS REPORT (March – May 2010)

Includes preliminary FCI assessment data for January – March 2010

FAMILY and CHILDREN'S INDEX (FCI) OVERVIEW

FCI is the name given to the Los Angeles County customized application authorized by California Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section 18961.5. The statute allows children services, health services, law enforcement, mental health services, probation, schools, and social services agencies

Los Angeles County's At-Risk Definition

- All "substantiated" and "inconclusive" allegations of child abuse reported to a child protection agency not including unfounded allegations;
- Whenever a child is allegedly the victim of a crime; and
- An event or fact involving a child or family member that, in and of itself, would not meet the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) definition of child abuse nor trigger a mandated report, but which would, when combined with additional events or facts, raise a reasonable cause for concern that the family is in need of intervention or services to prevent the occurrence of child abuse and neglect as defined in CANRA.

within counties to share specific information about families who have had relevant contacts with these agencies and who have been identified as being at risk for child abuse or neglect. The statute requires that each county develop their own "at-risk" definition (see box at left for the County's at-risk definition).

The application can only store specific information as allowed by law (see box below). It does so by receiving data from participating agency databases using a set of agency-specific at-risk indicators that conform to the County's at-risk definition. As described in the November 2009 FCI Memorandum of Understanding

(MOU), each agency uses their at-risk indicators as a filter to identify relevant cases. Once these cases are identified, allowable information is electronically imported into the FCI application.

Serving as a "pointer" system, FCI directs authorized users of participating agencies to other participating County agencies who have had contact with the family subject to an initial search/match made through the application. Once users are pointed to other agencies, the statute requires that confidential, substantive information about a family be shared through the formation of Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs), unless some other legally permissible way to share that information already exists. (See below for list of current County participating agencies.)

Allowable FCI Data

- Name, address, telephone number, and date and place of birth of family members;
- Number assigned to the case by each provider agency;
- Name and telephone number of each employee assigned to the case from each provider agency; and
- Date or dates of contact between each provider agency and a family member or family members.

CURRENT COUNTY PARTICIPANTS

- Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS);
- District Attorney (DA);
- Department of Mental Health (DMH);
- Probation Department (Probation);
- Department of Public Health (DPH);
- Department of Public Social Services (DPSS); and
- Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD).

REPORT OVERVIEW

Since the March 9, 2010 status report, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN), in conjunction with the FCI Managers Team¹ (Team) continued to make significant progress toward implementing your Board's directive to ensure that: (1) the FCI application is fully utilized; (2) efforts to include other County and non-County agencies continue to move forward; and (3) necessary enhancements are put in place to begin tracking and evaluating how information is being exchanged and used among participating FCI agencies.

This report is divided into two parts. The first is an outline of accomplishments since the March 9, 2010 status report. The second consists of preliminary efforts and results to track and assess the exchange of information, such as: (1) when requests for information from agencies are initiated; (2) the timeliness by which agencies respond to these requests; and (3) to the extent possible, how subsequent information is shared by FCI agencies.

It is important to underscore that these are *preliminary* findings that were obtained using an approach consisting of a "focus group" and an end user survey. A more precise method for obtaining data will soon be available through the FCI *Communications Log* (CommLog), which will automatically track much of this information. The CommLog is scheduled to come online by the middle of July 2010. In future reports, a combination of data extracted from the CommLog will be used to supplement quarterly anecdotal information obtained from focus groups and surveys.

IMPLEMENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

OPERATIONAL

- On March 9, 2010, conducted an informal "feedback" group with 60 Emergency Response (ER) Children's Social Workers (CSWs) and four Human Service Workers selected from DCFS' Lakewood Regional Office to gather their initial thoughts about the FCI application and information sharing process;
- On March 21, 2010, distributed a web-based survey to 814 authorized FCI users to gather crucial information about the application and its functionality;
- On April 1, 2010, submitted a Board memo entitled: "Family and Children's Index Replacement System Analysis and Recommendations". The memo was based on extensive national research on information sharing computer systems and contained an inventory of both County and non-County systems that could be used to supplement the FCI application by facilitating the exchange of information following a search and match into FCI. The memo also indicated that the FCI pointer application (FCI Tool) could not be changed without first significantly modifying the WIC statute 18961.5 and related laws;
- On April 27, 2010, ICAN and CEO, in partnership with the DA, convened a meeting with senior officers from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) to discuss their potential participation in FCI. During the discussion, it was determined that LAPD data could be extracted from the County's Electronic Suspected Child Abuse Reporting System (E-SCARS) and uploaded into the FCI application;

¹The Team is made up of representatives from the seven participating FCI agencies and the Chief Information Office, the Internal Services Department, and County Counsel.

- On April 29, 2010, Police Chief, Charlie Beck formally announced LAPD's decision to participate in FCI at ICAN's quarterly Policy meeting;
- On May 7, 2010, CEO and ICAN met with administrative and General Counsel representatives from the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) to explore their participation in FCI. Additional meetings are planned to discuss potential costs that might be incurred if LACOE participate in FCI; and
- On May 12, 2010, CEO and ICAN co-chaired a meeting of medical experts from the private sector, DCFS, and the Department of Health Services (DHS). The meeting culminated in the selection of initial at-risk indicators and a data extraction methodology that will be used by DHS and could be replicated by private hospitals to participate in FCI. The group will continue to meet to refine this approach (based on DHS' implementation and lessons learned) with the goal of bringing Children's Hospital LA (CHLA) on board by September 2010.

NEXT STEPS

- By July 23, 2010, complete online end user CommLog training for all participating FCI agencies;
- By July 27, 2010, execute the FCI MOU with LAPD;
- By July 27, 2010, execute a new FCI MOU that includes updated at-risk indicators for current departments and DHS;
- By July 30, 2010, conduct quarterly focus group(s) and distribute FCI end-user web-based survey;
- By August 15, 2010, train authorized users from DHS and LAPD on all aspects of the FCI application, as well as procedures and protocols for exchanging information;
- By August 16, 2010, in consultation with County Counsel and with efforts led by ICAN, execute the FCI MOU with the County's Department of the Coroner (Coroner);
- By August 23, 2010, train authorized staff from the Coroner on all aspects of the FCI application, as well as procedures and protocols for exchanging information;
- By October 15, 2010, execute the FCI MOU with CHLA; and
- By October 22, 2010, train authorized staff from CHLA on all aspects of the FCI application, as well as procedures and protocols for exchanging information.

TECHNICAL ENHANCEMENTS

ISD, with support from the Team, continued to implement a variety of technical enhancements that have increased the effectiveness of the FCI application, as well as its administration. These enhancements include:

- On February 2, 2010, granted CEO access to FCI reports for administrative and accountability purposes;
- February 22 and March 4, 2010, revised the Agency Data Import Information Report and the Queries Report to include uploaded information by day of week and generate reports using time ranges;
- On March 22, 2010, revised Program Manager display information on the *Verification Question and Answer* screen to facilitate verification of authorized end-users; and
- On March 22, 2010, revised the *Data Statistics* screen to include the frequency each agency imports data into FCI.

NEXT STEPS

- By July 16, 2010, create and implement a mechanism to automatically extract allowable information from the County's E-SCARS database for LAPD into FCI. While this process was developed to expand FCI participation by LAPD, it can also be used to expand participation to all law enforcement agencies in the County that agree to join FCI; and
- By July 23, 2010, implement the CommLog to automatically track and assess the exchange of information, such as: (1) when requests for information from other agencies are initiated; (2) the timeliness by which agencies respond to these requests; and (3) to the extent possible, how subsequent information is shared by FCI agencies.

LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS

County-sponsored AB 2322 (Feuer/Bass), amends five child welfare related statutes to: (1) clarify and standardize who is allowed to participate in MDTs; (2) authorize the County to store convictions on FCI for the 51 predicate offenses related to child abuse and neglect already being provided by the DA; and (3) allow identifying information on non-family members residing in a child's home to be stored in FCI. These changes to the law reflect feedback received from participating FCI agency staff (see Assessment Section below). AB 2322 passed the Assembly Floor by a vote of 77 to 0 on June 1, 2010, and is scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Human Services Committee on June 22, 2010. This measure is co-sponsored by the County Welfare Directors Association and the Service Employees International Union.

In addition, the DA has also introduced a bill to facilitate a more expeditious exchange of information among participating FCI agencies by reducing the number of members required to form a MDT from three to two. Ultimately, these legislative changes will help facilitate better decision making by CSWs who investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect and will promote the timely exchange of comprehensive information among FCI agencies.

FCI ASSESSMENT

The sections below detail the approaches and initial findings used to assess how end-users experience the FCI application and any subsequent exchange of information that occurs between participating FCI agencies.

Below are two scenarios that demonstrate how useful the FCI Tool has been to DCFS CSWs when investigating alleged cases of child abuse and neglect. These experiences are taken from a survey conducted on March 31, 2010:

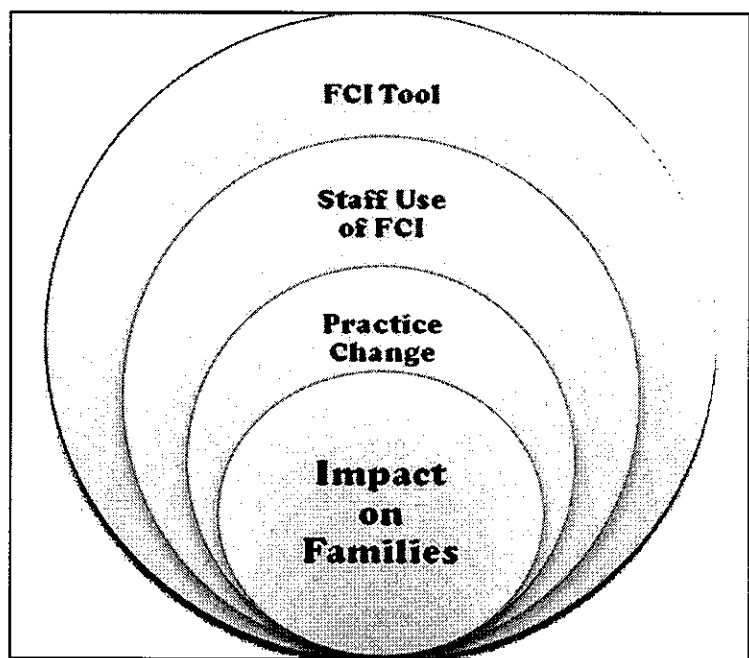
1. *A search into the FCI database indicated that there was a match with the DA. As a result, the CSW spoke to the DA contact person and found out that the father had been incarcerated for two years due to child cruelty and domestic violence. Because the father did not disclose this information to the CSW during the interview, the FCI information was extremely helpful in making the decision to remove the child from the home and place with relatives for his safety.*
2. *During the course of investigating a child abuse referral, a CSW received information from FCI that the child in question had contact with DMH. As a result, the CSW contacted DMH to learn more about the child's needs and current and past services. This interaction was very helpful to the CSW because the parents had limited the amount of information they shared. Because the CSW was able to gain more information about the child's mental health history, they were able to conduct a more thorough investigation.*

OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

As described earlier, the Team has developed a variety of assessment strategies to begin measuring both the operational aspects of the FCI Tool, as well as how information is shared and used among participating departments. By better understanding these two areas, the Team plans to track interdepartmental teaming efforts and changes in joint case management practices (Practice Change) associated with FCI. Ultimately, the Team wants to determine the impact FCI-related activities have on children and their families. Please see box below for an overview of the four key aspects of FCI that the Team plans to assess over time.

As a means of developing a baseline for future assessment efforts, the Team distributed a web-based survey to over 814 users and conducted an informal feedback group with 60 Emergency Response (ER) CSWs and four Human Service Workers.

Based on the data collected, the Team concluded that a significant number of users have found the FCI application to be very helpful. For example, many staff indicated that key information, such as domestic violence and mental health histories would not have been as readily available if FCI didn't exist. Further, most cited that the information



obtained through FCI had helped them design a more robust plan to protect the child and/or help the family.

"FCI information, especially from law enforcement, heavily assists with the investigation." DCFS CSW

Below is a detailed description of the assessment process and the initial findings obtained.

A. INFORMAL FEEDBACK GROUP

As previously mentioned, the Team intends to conduct focus groups with FCI users from all participating agencies on a quarterly basis. On March 9, 2010, an informal "feedback" group was conducted as a pilot effort. The group consisted of CSWs and Human Service Workers selected from DCFS' Lakewood Regional Office. A series of questions were asked and an open dialogue was encouraged. In addition to gathering vital feedback about FCI, additional discussion themes and questions were identified that will be used to guide the design of future focus groups. Overall, staff felt that the FCI application works efficiently and provides helpful and timely information. They also felt that most of the seven participating departments responded to requests for information promptly and thoroughly. Finally, participants were asked to recommend ways for improving FCI.

Below are some of the most common responses/themes obtained from the group:

What is working?

- A number of ER CSWs stated that DMH is very helpful and takes "a lot of time with us to discuss the case" in question. The CSWs appreciated the time and effort on the part of DMH staff to engage in joint case planning;
- Many CSWs stated that "the DA is always extremely prompt with their responses and helpful especially in the Long Beach Office";
- The User Verification process works well and is easy to use;
- The FCI training was helpful and covered all aspects of how to use FCI; and
- It is extremely helpful to have FCI information such as domestic violence history before going out on the initial visit to the home.

"I would honestly have to say that the FCI is a very useful tool." DCFS CSW

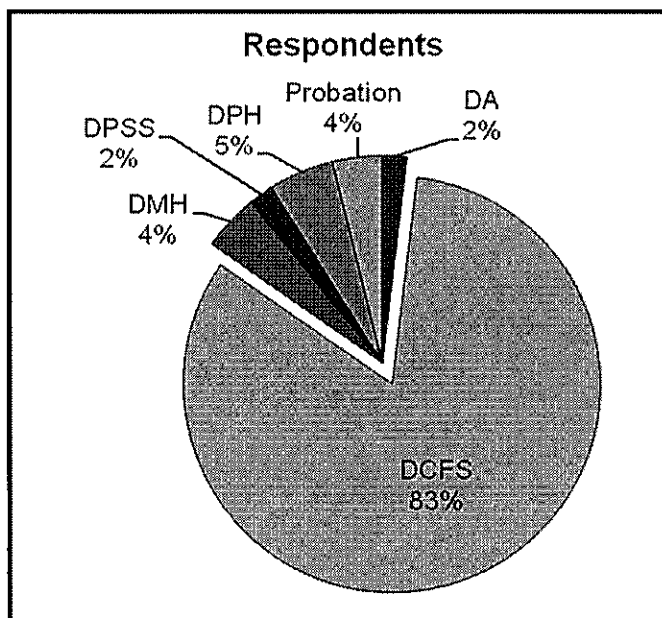
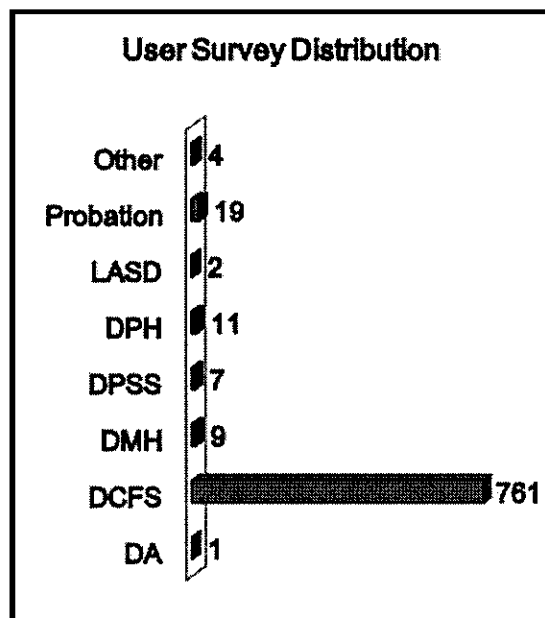
Suggested improvements

- Sometimes, FCI information is not as current as the CSWs would like it to be. However, the information is still valuable because it shows history for a family, which may still have an impact on the current situation;
- CSWs felt that it would be best if the FCI search (query) was done by the DCFS Hotline staff when the referral comes in rather than sending the referral to the respective regional office to conduct a search. It would be more efficient if the referral and the FCI results came to the regional office at the same time;
- All departments need to respond to requests for information within the mandated 72-hour period;
- Automate the information request and response process so that appropriate information can be sent through email;
- Develop the means to simultaneously submit a single request for information to all relevant departments so that CSWs can receive all the requested information at once without having to submit multiple requests for information;
- List all the convictions for family members and anyone else living in the home;

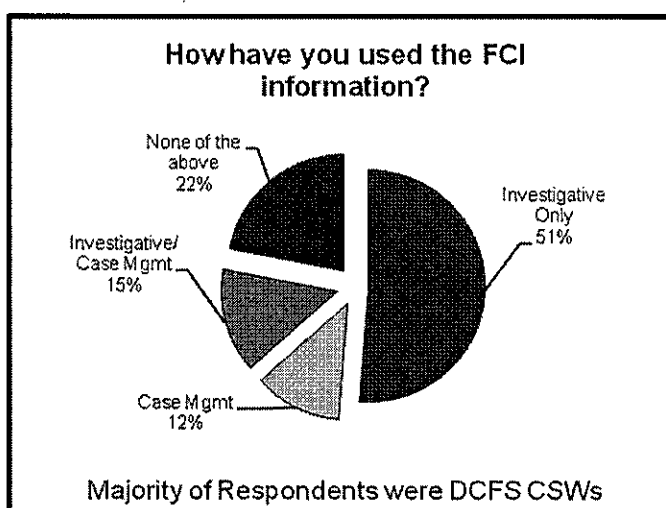
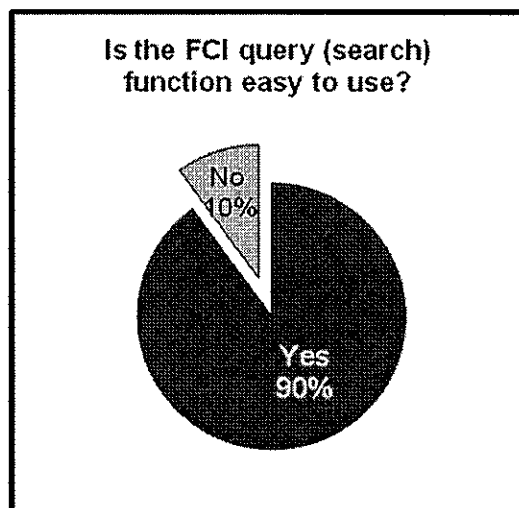
- Develop a link to E-SCARS to help get criminal record information from all reporting agencies faster;
- Include school information in FCI; and
- Reduce the number of staff required to form a MDT from three to two persons.

B. USER SURVEY RESULTS

On March 31, 2010, the Team distributed a 23 question survey using County web-based software to all recently trained FCI users. The purpose of the survey was to gather information from front line staff to inform future enhancements of the FCI application and the information sharing protocols. Surveys will be automatically emailed to new and current users each quarter and will continue to be revised based on responses received. The survey was distributed to 814 FCI users with nearly 20 percent (158) of users responding.



The following are highlights of the most significant results obtained from the survey. Note: not all respondents provided comments.



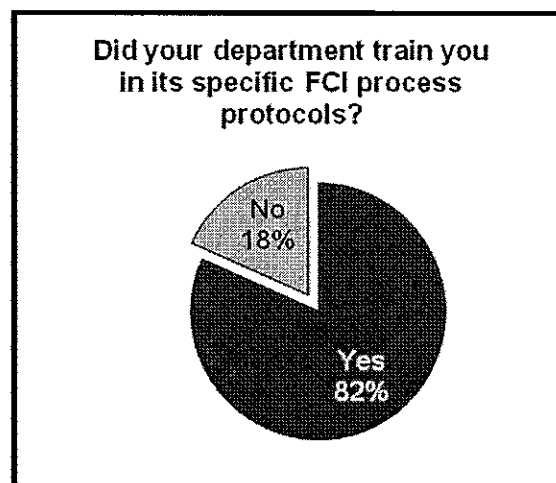
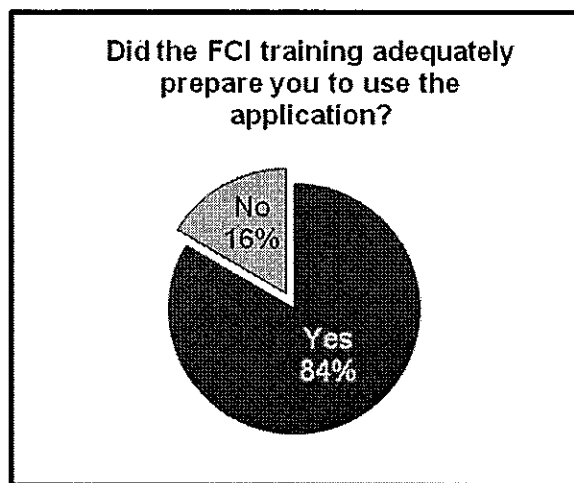
FCI INFORMATION SHARING PROCESS

Most common themes

- Provide access to specific case information as opposed to having to contact each department to obtain the information;
- Improve the time it takes other departments to share information as it can take weeks to receive a call back regarding a request for information;
- Reduce the time needed to acquire specific case information by attaching the FCI search results to the referral rather than having to follow-up with each department individually;
- Provide clearer guidelines about what types of information can be shared and in what context that information can be exchanged; and
- Create a specific unit within each department to conduct FCI searches, make requests for information and facilitate all documentation of FCI information for social workers. This would eliminate duplicative searches and cut down on increased workload.

"The FCI report allowed us to see that a criminal with child abuse history lived in the home." Public Health Nurse

FCI overall training – (1,202 staff were trained between November 2009 and January 2010.)



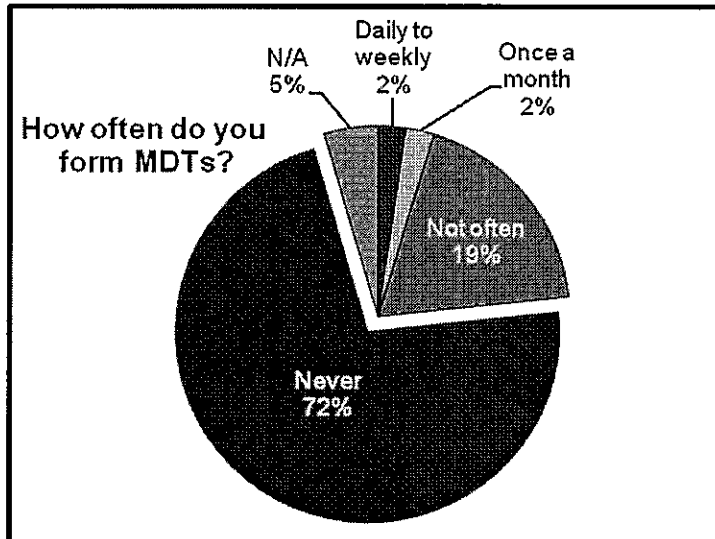
FCI QUERY RESULTS

Most common themes

- FCI contains accurate data;
- FCI information has helped in identifying the current location of a child and/or family;
- Oftentimes the data does not show matches with other departments that may exist (i.e., DPSS);
- Occasionally FCI does not reflect complete DCFS history;
- Accuracy of information can be inconsistent or outdated; and
- Sometimes the dates of the events are incorrect.

Formation of MDTs

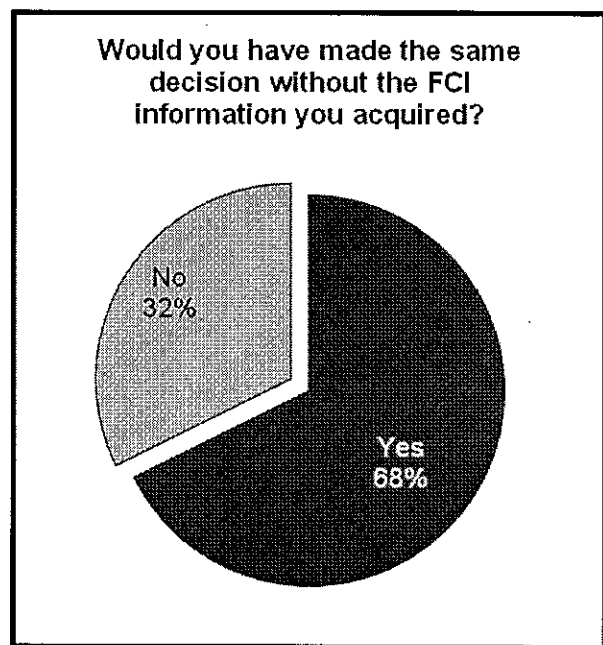
As indicated in the chart below, MDTs are not frequently formed. Confidential, substantive information about a family is not always required to be shared through the formation of MDTs if other legally permissible ways to share that information already exist. For example: DCFS, DMH, and Probation, can share information with one another without forming MDTs as other existing laws² permit this exchange to occur.



DECISION-MAKING USING FCI INFORMATION

Most common themes

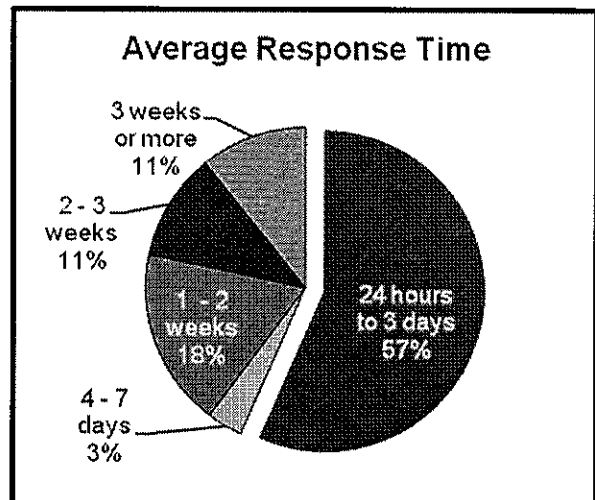
- One third of CSWs would not have made the same decision if they did not have access to FCI information (see chart);
- FCI provides valuable comprehensive information and is a very useful tool;
- Historical information does not accurately portray the current level of stability of the family or their current needs;
- CSWs can gain information from FCI that they would not otherwise be able to access quickly;
- CSWs are able to design a more appropriate case plan for the child and the family because FCI provides valuable mental health information;
- FCI helps to understand past history; and
- FCI is only used because it is mandated by DCFS leadership.



² California Civil Code 56.103 and Penal Code Sec.11160 and 11166.

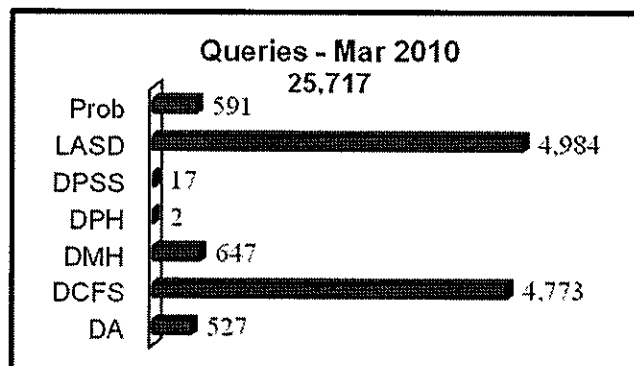
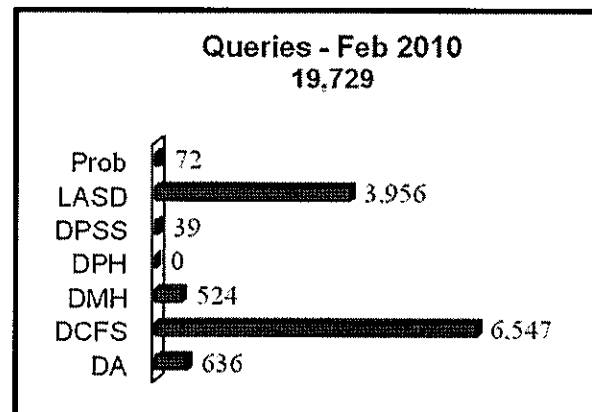
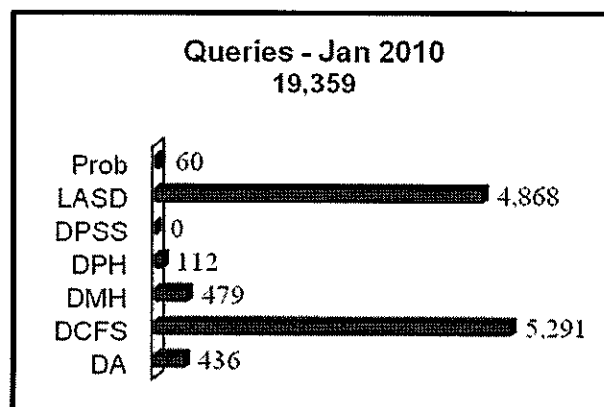
Average response time to inquiries between departments

According to the FCI MOU, each participating agency shall respond to requests for information from another FCI agency immediately or within three business days of the time that it was made. Also, each agency is required to maintain 24 hours/seven-days-a-week capability to respond to requests for information. It is expected that the time gap will improve as the CommLog technical enhancement is implemented by June 30, 2010.



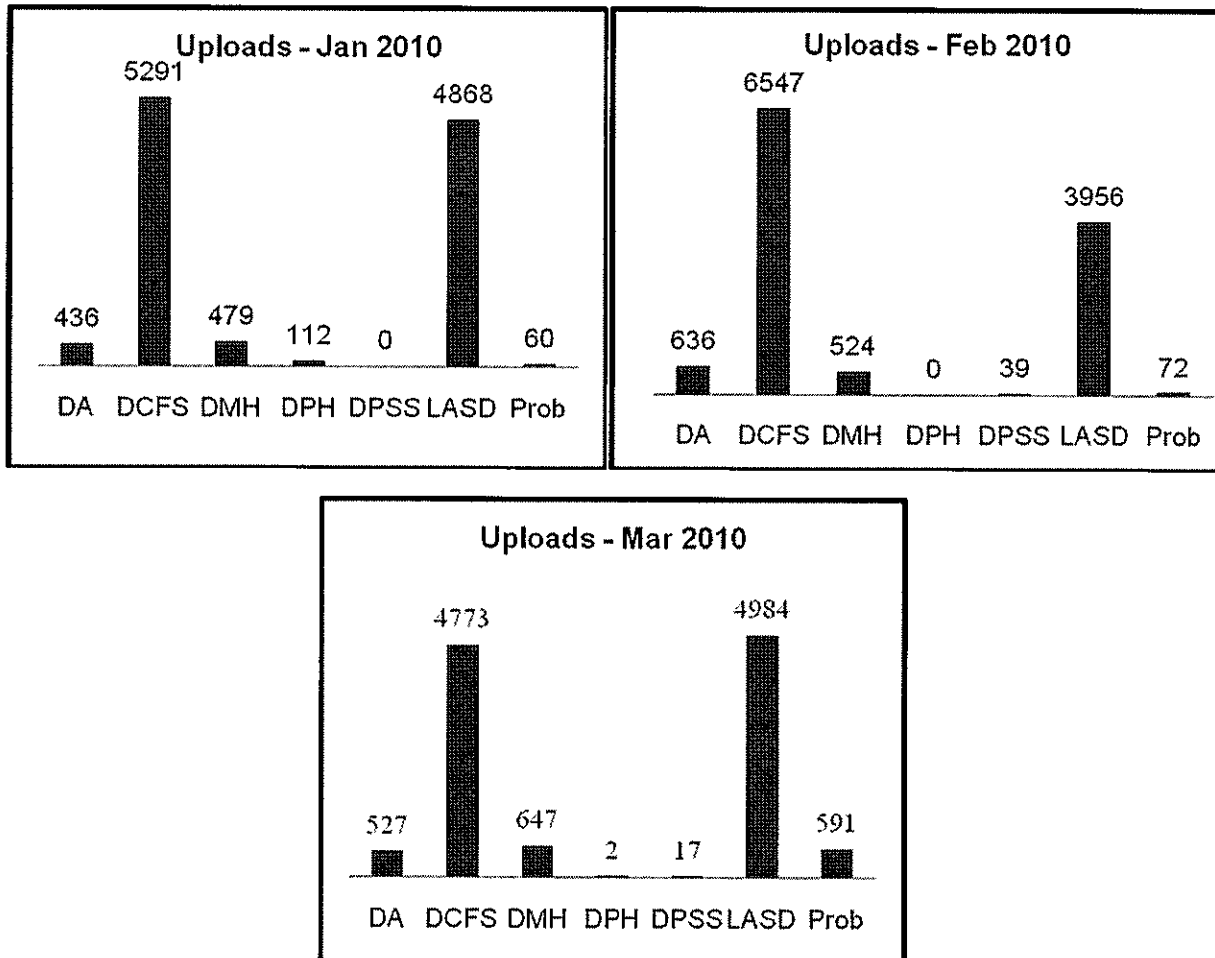
C. FCI OVERVIEW

The majority of queries into FCI are performed by DCFS' staff for the purposes of investigating suspected instances of child abuse and neglect. Other County departments perform queries to verify addresses, to assist in basic case management and/or to verify whether a record exists. Therefore, the number of queries performed is not necessarily indicative of actual use of the FCI by each department. It is also important to note that the total number of queries does not equate matched records because the query acts much like a search engine in that results may produce a large amount of records that need to be further refined with the additional search criteria. This issue will be resolved through the future technical enhancements to FCI.



Data uploads

The frequency of data uploads outlined in the charts below is indicative of only new records being added to FCI on a monthly basis. Few or no data uploads indicates that no upload was necessary because no records matched the agency's at-risk criteria for the reporting period.



Interdepartmental communications data

As mentioned earlier in this report, the Team has developed an automated mechanism, called the FCI CommLog, which will track interdepartmental communications. However, since the CommLog was not in operation during the writing of this report communication traffic between agencies for the period spanning January – March 2010, had to be estimated manually through the use of internal agency logs that were then submitted to the CEO for analysis. Additionally, given that DCFS does not have the capacity to track the number of actual requests for information made to other departments, ISD calculated the average number of potential requests for information that could have been made by DCFS to other departments during this time period.

As can be seen in the following two charts, the number of average potential requests for information made by DCFS to other departments does not match the total number of estimated responses to DCFS documented by departments.

**DCFS Requests for Information from other Departments and
Estimated Departmental Responses to DCFS
January – March 2010**

DCFS Requests for Information	
Average Potential Requests	2,616

Estimated Responses to DCFS	
DMH	144
DPH	16
DPSS	5
LASD	431
Probation	35
Total	690

The current inability for the County to accurately calculate the flow of information between departments helps to reinforce the need for an automated CommLog. The CommLog will provide real-time traffic data, thereby, greatly enhancing the Team's ability to take corrective actions as needed and provide a more comprehensive picture of how information is exchanged among participating agencies.

CONCLUSION

Over the last quarter, the CEO, ICAN, and the Team have continued to work collaboratively to implement your Board's directive to fully implement the use of the County's FCI application. Building on the success of the previous quarter (i.e., implementing a series of end user technical enhancements, standardizing protocols and executing a new MOU, and training over 1,200 staff), the Team was able to expand FCI participation to other County and non-County agencies; and wrote and submitted AB 2322. In addition, the Team developed a series of assessment/diagnostic tools, such as focus groups, surveys and the CommLog to facilitate information sharing among agencies and increase accountability among FCI partners to better identify, prevent, manage, and/or treat child abuse or neglect.

As the Team continues to work collaboratively, it is expected that FCI's use and functionality will continue to improve as additional enhancements are made to the application and the information sharing process is guided by feedback received from FCI end-users. The Team will continue to identify new legislative opportunities and expand participation to include other County and non-County agencies as needed to increase the County's ability to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We will continue to keep your Board apprised of these developments on a regular basis.